Yorkshare "Tools for Students" Overview

Communication Tools	Description	Turn off or leave on?
Announcements	A means for you to keep students aware of key upcoming events or news about the course. This is the default "home" page for your module unless you explicitly change your course entry point to a different left menu item.	Leave Announcements on unless you are using another method for keeping students informed that would render Announcements an unused navigation option. Note, however, that system-wide announcements (such as when the VLE might be scheduled to go down) appear in your module Announcements page.
Collaboration (Chat and Virtual Classroom)	Used for synchronous (live) communication or collaboration. The chat tool is a peer to peer messaging application (i.e. you type a message and send it to a connected user who immediately receives it and can then respond). The Virtual Classroom is a similar tool except that it allows a session "leader" to manage multiple "student" connections and includes a means of directly transmitting visuals as well as text to all those who are connected and also includes a "question" queuing system for those connected.	Unless you anticipate using live chat or virtual classroom it is likely you will want to turn this option off. Or you may leave them on for students to explore and use themselves (this is possibly unlikely due to the proliferation and general availability of dedicated and more well featured chat tools such as Microsoft Messenger and Skype).
Discussion Board	Asynchronous tool for discussion which uses the forum, thread and post model. Module members post messages and other people reply as and when convenient	Only turn off if you do not intend adding any forums to your site. Left on, if you have no forums then it will be a dead-end navigational link.
Group Pages	The Group Management link in the Control Panel allows you to divide your cohort into discrete groups for collaborative, small group learning activities or other purposes such as managing what content different groups of students can see (including limiting Wiki/Blog membership and providing group only discussion forums etc.). Students see a Group Pages tool in the Communications Tool list that takes them to the VLE's automatically created group area.	Do not turn off unless you have no intention of dividing your cohort into sub-groups. Note that if you turn off Group Pages and then later want to add groups to your module you will need to turn it on in order to get the Manage Groups Control Panel link back. If there are no groups in your module consider turning it off.

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Messages	An email style messaging system localised to the module (it is not a synchronous chat tool like Messenger or Skype nor is it actual email). It will only allow you to send and receive messages to people enrolled in the module.	If you don't want students to communicate in this manner, either with you or with each other students, it is a good idea to switch this tool off (you may want to encourage people to communicate through other more public means such as Discussion Forum or Blog use for example). If you leave this option on you may also need to keep checking your Messages area just in case a student chooses to use it to contact you.
Roster	A searchable list of all those enrolled in the module. Can be used to find specific enrollees or just to list all. The names in the Roster are links to each user's module Homepage (if they have defined one and Homepage is switched on). Note that anyone with a non-student role cannot create a Homepage.	Normally left on.
Send Email	Self explanatory, but is limited to sending email only to those enrolled in the module. Choosing who to send mail to is facilitated by the interface and can be to a range of people from individuals through groups to all users (plus other subsets of enrolees) etc.	You may want to switch off if you prefer more public course communication (such as Discussion Forum or Blog). Students can also very easily use this tool to send spam email to the whole cohort (which may or may not be a consideration in deciding whether to leave it on or off – particularly for a large cohort).

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Address Book	As the name implies – each enrollee in a module can create a list of contacts (the list is held in the VLE for their account). Fields include First/Last Name, Email, Company, Job Title, Street 1, City, State / Province, Zip / Postal Code, Country, Website, Home Phone, Work Phone, Work Fax, Mobile Phone.	If you feel students are unlikely to use it you may want to switch this off.
Calendar	Can be used to keep students aware of key dates during the course (exams, assignment deadlines etc).	If you have no intention of using the Calendar tool (it is a little clunky) you may want to switch it off.
Course Journal (Blog)	A module level version of the Journal LX Blog tool that can be used in personal or plenary mode. Entries are edited as per the WIKI (i.e. as a simple webpage) but are displayed one after the other rather than as discrete pages.	Switch off if you have no intention of using it within your module or don't want students to use it. Note that students can't make entries by default so if you do want students to have the option of blogging you will need to configure the tool appropriately.
Digital Dropbox	Ad-hoc file submission tool with a non-intuitive two step submission process.	Switch this off unless you are using it in your module to receive ad-hoc files from your students. Instructors using Assignment submission in particular should seriously consider turning off Dropbox in order to avoid potential student confusion over which tool they should use to submit files.
Glossary	A means to provide a text only course associated glossary (of terminology etc).	Switch off if you don't intend to make any entries in it. Note that students can't make entries using this tool (it is read only for students).

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Homepage	Every one with the Student role on a module can define a simple Homepage. It is aimed at providing students with a means of profiling/introducing themselves to other people in the module. Fields of information entry include: Introduction, Personal Information, an image upload (for personal avatar) and 3 favourite website link makers with description field.	Leave on unless you intend students to introduce themselves by some other means such as a Wiki or if you just don't want students to spend time creating profiles.
My Grades	The tool used to allow students to globally see how they have performed in any tests/assignments within your module. Note that those without a student role do not have access to the My Grades view. The view is very basic and doesn't show feedback (just scores) on a per Gradebook item basis in a table.	If actual VLE test/assignment/grading scores aren't overtly relevant (due to being formative and containing feedback at source for example) or if you are using assignments but aren't putting grades or marks in the VLE's Gradebook you may want to switch this tool link off.
Online Journal	Very basic online journal facility (non-blog in style) for students to use. Cannot be shared and is text only. Only an individual and Instructors can see entries.	This tool is really superseded by the Course Journal/Journal LX blogging tool. Consider switching this off.
Personal Information	Special settings for enrolees. Enrolees can change their Privacy settings, whether the Visual Text Box Editor is on or off and which Language Pack their interface uses.	Leave on.
Search	Tool for searching the module (using text queries).	Leave on.
Sentient Resource List	A facilitated means of providing students with a reading list of library resource (both tactile and digital).	Switch off if you aren't creating a Sentient/Discover facilitated reading resource list for your students.
Tasks	Can be used to keep students aware of what tasks are expected of them and for when. Also provides the student with a way of flagging a task's state. It is a simple text only reminder for students to do things that they themselves can flag as "in progress" or "complete" but doesn't work as a means for you to track task progress	Switch off if you don't intend to use this tool consistently (to prevent students from accessing it unnecessarily for example).

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Teams Site (Wiki)	A tool that can be used for plenary collaborative "web-site" building. The tool provides the means to simply create and edit web-pages and link them together from an interface within the VLE. The module level Wiki can either have all students participating in editing or none with commenting on or off (unlike the Group "in-content" version of the Wiki which can have subsets of students participating only). Note that if students are locked out of editing the module level wiki they can still read it (if it is switched on) and add comments if commenting has been allowed.	Switch off if you have no intention of using it within your module or don't want students to use it. Note that students CAN make entries by default so if you don't want students using the module level wiki and have no intention of using it yourself do switch it off.
The Electric Blackboard	A virtual notepad (text only).	Suggest switching this off. It is very basic and of limited use (its contents can't be formatted or exported for example).
User Manual	Launches the VLE's built in Student instruction manual for how to use the various features of the VLE.	May want to leave on though the actual content is basic and lacking in user-friendliness.

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